

Fostering unaccompanied migrating minors. A cross-border comparison

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ABSTRACT

The increase in the arrival of unaccompanied minors to Europe rises as a new challenge for the local authorities responsible for the reception. The comparison of two cross-border regions shows the possibility of transferring successful practices between European states. According to the stages of this migratory flow, the weaknesses and the strengths of the child care systems' responses are analysed, as well as the strategies minors share to improve their settlement options in the local host societies. It is concluded that the diversity of local institutional responses to this migration is a factor that increases the vulnerability of minors. Therefore, a harmonisation of European legislation on international protection of migrant children becomes necessary.

1. Introduction

The current migratory flows of unaccompanied minors (UAM), from the Global South to Europe, imply new forms of vulnerability (Bhabha et al., 2016). These new forms are not only linked to the actors who are more or less visible to child care arrangements: exploitation networks, smugglers, etc. (Petit & Robin, 2014). They are also linked to the risks caused by the own precarious fostering of those minors, both in transit and in the states of destination. Facing these migratory policies that challenge them, young people develop strategies to protect themselves and to improve their circumstances. In a process of mutual adaptation accelerated in the new century (Knezevic, 2017), access to health, education or legal residence become tension points, pending resolution in a lasting manner.

This article highlights the importance of local authorities (LA) in the implementation of these improvements, given that in the European context LA are the political level where fostering is most often deployed (Ní Raghallaigh & Thornton, 2017). The international comparison of local integration practices of these migrant adolescents was, in turn, a pending research challenge (Chatty, 2007). From it, successful protection practices will be able to be transferred to the states where the fostering is being overwhelmed today.

Firstly, the current situation of this migration in Europe is presented. Secondly, the situation of this migratory flow in two cross-border regions (South of France and North of Spain) is described. Then, their adapting of their protection schemes to this migratory flow is

analysed. And finally, successful measures that have allowed an improvement in the foster care for these adolescents in the local context are discussed upon.

2. Unaccompanied minors in Europe

Since the nineties, the minors' migrating to another country without their parents is a process dealt with by European researchers from various disciplines (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007; Kohli, 2006; Vacchiano & Jiménez, 2012). Some of the approaches propose a perspective on this transnational mobility that takes into account the interactions that arise between local institutions (e.g. foster care arrangements) and young migrants (Suárez, 2006). In this 'meso' level, intermediate actors and structures show differences in priorities (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014) that cause tensions between foster care practitioners and local policy makers. Although international researches have issued plenty of recommendations for good practices (Arnold et al., 2015), these have hardly been implemented or taken into account before this migratory flow. Currently state and local authorities are introducing changes in the foster care protocols, which have been modified according to the evolution of the volume of the fostered minors. These changes have influenced the migratory process of young people, often weakening them (Smyth, 2014).

In this context, the diversity of responses to this migration in Europe has been analysed (Senovilla, 2013). It has been concluded that the states confine themselves to coordinating border control tools at the

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expense of a harmonisation of their fostering policies and child care systems (Kanics, Senovilla, & Touzenis, 2010). This legislative harmonisation should be based on this evidence and supported by international organisations (Baillleul & Senovilla, 2015; UNHCR and UNICEF, 2014). It should prioritise policies of fostering unaccompanied minors that successfully address the integration of young people (O'Donnell, 2018). And it should be regarded that they will continue to migrate to Europe in coming decades.

This precariousness of the foster care has facilitated a spillover into the care arrangements during the last years, unable to manage this migration. In 2016 more than 100,000 children arrived in Europe, of which one third were unaccompanied minors or separated from their families (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019). That same year, more than 63,000 unaccompanied adolescents requested asylum in the European Union. And 70% of the unaccompanied minors who arrived in Italy had suffered some type of violence, which forced them to leave their country of origin (UNICEF, 2017). In Spain, during 2017, the number of unaccompanied migrant minors stood at 6,414, which is a 60.4% increase with respect to 2016 (Save the Children, 2018).

The research carried out since the beginning of the century and the analysis of the current migration crisis point to the need for an institutional commitment: an agreement that would take into account the actions implemented by the countries of Southern Europe, with greater experience as a border with Africa and Asia, and would transfer the improvements in fostering protocols for child care systems to other European states (Chatty, 2007).

3. A multi-site research

The research, conceived as multi-site (Falzon, 2009), was carried out in two countries, Spain and France. The empirical data was gathered by one of the researchers in two periods. The first one, in the framework of a PhD research (2009–2012), and the second one, within a later research on transboundary migratory flows of minors (2012–2018). In both cases, the research design combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches in various phases (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). In the first phase, quantitative and qualitative data was collected, linked together through sampling. Secondly, both data collections were analysed on their own. And finally, the results were linked at multiple points and studied.

During the first phase, with an authorisation granted by the autonomous government of Aragón (northern Spain), quantitative data was collected from the files of 365 minors fostered from 2000 to 2013. At the same time, the qualitative study drew on individual interviews with the young migrants themselves ($n = 17$). Only one of these was a female. This fact responds to the gender distribution of arrivals in this region as about 95,6% of the unaccompanied minors are male. The adolescents interviewed were between 17 and 19 years of age. However, all of them were under 18 years of age upon arrival which took place during the period 2006–2010. Furthermore, they all were selected using stratified sampling in relation to their country of origin. The majority were from Morocco (14); the others, from Algeria (1) and Senegal (2), according to the statistical sample of the files under study.

Accessing to minors in vulnerable positions for research may be difficult (Kohli, 2006; Pastoor, 2015). The position as a former practitioner let the researcher gain their trust and start a snowball sampling: one minor gives the researcher the name of another, who likewise provides other name, and so on (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). All of them verbally expressed their consent, which was recorded, like the rest of the semi-structured interview (from 45 min to one hour), and they also received the researcher's contact details and supplementary explanations on the confidentiality and anonymity of the information they supplied. Adolescents were asked to talk freely about their context of origin, migration itinerary, aspirations when they left, the foster centres in Europe, their expectations regarding success or failure in the destination society, and, finally, about the migratory actors less visible to the

protection system (e.g. family).

Interviews with practitioners and activists ($n = 35$) were conducted in the same period in three cities (Zaragoza, Teruel, Huesca). Interviewees were sampled to cover different services (care system, juvenile justice, forensic medicine, police) and status (public or private organisations). Most of interviews were conducted in their place of work or, if necessary, in a different location where they felt comfortable. They lasted between one and two hours and were recorded, when an informed consent form was signed. If not, the field notes made during interviews were used as supplementary information.

The fieldwork in France focused on its southern area (the Nouvelle Aquitaine region and the city of Toulouse). In a first stage, when the migration was less relevant in France, semi-structured interviews to minors of a Moroccan origin sheltered in residences ($n = 5$) and to practitioners ($n = 4$) were conducted. Only field notes and the same scripts as in Spain were used. Subsequently, between February and April 2018, as the number of fostered children increased, semi-structured interviews (not recorded) were replicated in three cities: practitioners from private organisations ($n = 3$) and a local authority dedicated to the protection of childhood as well as activists ($n = 2$) and a civil society organisation were interviewed. During this last fieldwork, a participant observation was also developed in a municipal space for free time and two squats for migrant adolescents. In these spaces, the field notebook was used as a tool for recording conversations with young people (Gu, 2013), mostly from West Africa (Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Ivory Coast, etc.) and of ages close to 18, often in conflict with local authorities when ascertaining their age.

In a second phase, the variables of the files (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics, duration of the reception, reasons for closing the file) were analysed using SPSS 19.0. And then, the transcribed interviews were coded 'vertically' (one interview at a time) by Excel 2007, to identify units of approximate meaning. Then they were coded 'horizontally' (the set of interviews), generating wider analytical categories and keywords (Pastoor, 2015).

And, in a third phase, the categories from the qualitative and quantitative data were combined and synthesized in the results discussed below. Subsequently, host administrative practices in both cross-border regions were interpreted and summarised in the discussion.

4. Results

The data collected during these years of fieldwork shows two regions in which the increase in migration studied, which occurred at two different times, has similar characteristics. Thus, when describing the current profiles of adolescent migrants and reception policies in the south of France, situations that had already occurred in northern Spain were repeated. This could respond to a migratory model, currently under debate.

4.1. Profiles

In 2017, the origin of the minors sheltered in France was mainly Africa (71%) and to a lesser extent Asia (20%), with socio-demographic characteristics apparently stabilised: clear majority of male minors and from 15 years of age. The profiles are very similar in the Nouvelle Aquitaine region (Allard et al., 2017): with a majority of male minors (90%), from Sub-Saharan Africa (Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, etc.) and, in smaller number, from Asian countries (Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan) and from the Maghreb (mainly Morocco).

In the Spanish case, this profile has been historically different, but this is changing. The majority of the foster children are still African males. But, although they came mostly from the Maghreb, the percentage of sub-Saharan is increasing in some provinces. The number of Asian minors is very small. In the region of Aragón, in 2017, 57% of the minors were Maghrebian males. The percentage of sub-Saharan

adolescents in protection has increased in recent years: between 17.4% and 40%, in some periods.

On the other hand, the challenges that the interviewed adolescents and practitioners indicated as having an impact on the young migrants' well-being are presented in relation to the following stages of the hosting.

4.2. Detection

The results show that the sociodemographic profiles of minors detected in the south of France vary greatly according to: the geographic scope where the resources to which they are derived are situated in that first contact with local authorities (i. e. size of the municipality), the migratory itineraries of adolescents (i. e. region of origin in Africa), and the European states through which they may have previously passed (basically, Spain and Italy). This heterogeneity, which also occurred in Aragon, has a common point in both regions: the high mobility of young people, who flee from the observation and diagnostic centres, sometimes in just a few hours.

In this period of flow growth, practitioners show their perplexity about the volatility of this migration, on both sides of the border. Among the possible causes, they indicate the presence of relatives in that same region, as well as the exploitation networks and criminal groups that capture some very vulnerable profiles: adolescents from the Maghreb with drug problems (Toulouse) and Romanian female minors forced into prostitution (Zaragoza).

The speeches of the French practitioners, like those of their colleagues from the south at the time, demand more training to approach the intervention with a profile of young people for whom the existing devices are not designed and that is not addressed within their academic qualifications. They ask for more statistical information on the situation of the migratory flow as well. In both regions, they consider the reception of these minors a responsibility of the European migratory policies, not of the local authorities for the protection of the childhood. They also point out that the profiles of vulnerable native children are set apart from these resources more often, given the scarcity of places and the possibility of referring them to the extended family.

These shortcomings, plus the absence of interpreters and protocols that favour intercultural professional competences, crystallise in bad practices. Especially in interviews in which those responsible for the first diagnosis should provide temporary protection: in Poitiers and Toulouse (March 2018), young migrants and activists report that aggressive attitudes and psychological pressure are frequent in those interviews which are aimed at minors in order to make them fall into contradictions when accounting their migrations (Senovilla, 2017). Also similar testimonies were registered in Aragon (06/07/2011):

Young Moroccan: They want to get something out of you. I don't know, they think people silly, they ask you questions. They tell you: how old were you that year? To see if you make a mistake, they think you're of a different age.

4.3. Age determination

In France, the age assessment of adolescents who migrate autonomously is done through bone testing. And the delay of its administrative process, up to a year, is a common practice (Doineau & Godefroy, 2017). In the region studied, there has been a 16% increase in the number of young people assessed and a significant reduction in the number of young people recognised as minors in the assessments: from 70% to 38% (Allard et al., 2017). All in all, the fieldwork shows that there are significant disparities between provinces within the same region, as well as between regions, just as it has happened in Spain since the beginning of the century. When young people present documents that prove their age, this is accepted in some regions and rejected in others. In Nouvelle Aquitaine, only a few provinces have shortened

the time for this procedure. The highest rate of positive forensic recognition of minority is concentrated in certain cities.

4.4. First reception

The delay of the procedure and the discretionary results of the age estimation are administrative practices that limit the access of young people to the welcoming centres. The capacity of LAs to temporarily lodge all detected minors in these centres has been overwhelmed in both regions, at different times, when the volume of arrivals rapidly increased in a short period of time. In Nouvelle Aquitaine, these resources, in addition to being insufficient, are not adequate for the needs of young migrants: there are currently adolescents housed in youth hostels, rural holiday resorts (in very isolated environments) and small boarding houses, often without a continuous presence of educators; there can also be found migrants already assessed as minors to whom a residential resource is not provided. In Aragon, the main reception centre has suffered saturation incidents in certain periods. In both contexts, the number of escapes of minors to other provinces has risen and there have been many cases of young people who reach 18 years without having their administrative situation regularised.

After a first overflow, some LAs respond to these challenges by complying with the existing protocols. In the French department of Haute Garonne, five new centres have been opened in a year and the assessment is now carried out in five days (interview, February 2018). In Aragón, the regional government has tripled its capacity of reception during 2018, arranging new places with private entities. In both cases, the number of escapes has diminished and discourses have arisen among public practitioners about the possible so called 'pull effect'.

4.5. Guardianship

The increase of places in the care system allows the effective protection of the UAM. In both regions, the difficulties at this stage are focused on:

- The difficulties to insert these young people into compulsory education, being most of them derived to occupational training itineraries, oriented to low-skilled jobs.
- The lack of sufficient resources and practitioners trained in ethnopsychiatry to treat mental health disorders in public health systems.
- The invisibility of minors, especially girls, detected as victims of trafficking.
- And the difficulties to achieve document regularisation of minors, when the embassies of their countries of origin do not favour these procedures.

5. Migration flow and institutional adaptation

The findings of this research show that practitioners in both countries do not know, on the one hand, how the migratory flow of these adolescents takes place and, on the other hand, how other European child care systems adapt to this profile of minors. This article demonstrates that this adaptation occurs at a local level, so monitoring it, from the perspective of the states, would make it difficult to establish evidence-based models and to transfer the good practices on foster care. This is something urgent in the current migration crisis (Bhabha et al., 2016).

5.1. A model of migration flow

Based on this framework, researches carried out over two decades on this migratory flow in southern Europe (mainly Spain and Italy) could make it possible to propose a model of mutual adaptation between young migrants and local authorities. To facilitate the

application of this model in other European states, two cross-border regions, Aragón (Spain) and Nouvelle Aquitaine (France) were analysed. They can adequately represent the geographical and social transition between the south and the centre of the continent, and in terms of youth migratory itineraries as well.

Our findings show that in both regions, there has been a progressive evolution of protocols for the care of unaccompanied minors in response to changes in their migratory flow. According to the proposed model (Peris, 2015), in Southern Europe there have been at least four phases:

- a. Zero-phase: where the local child care system has been designed and implemented for native minors at risk, according to standardised itineraries, unrelated to the current globalisation of youth migrations (Giovannetti, 2016).
- b. First phase: it starts with the reception of the first unaccompanied minors referred to or detected by the local authorities responsible for the protection of children. In that period, in which minors are 'passing by' and not settling where they are detected, the reception is precarious, inexperienced and has few resources to assume this new profile. When the volume of receptions begins to exceed a certain level, management decisions 'exceed the technical level and reach the political level' too (Peris, 2015: 405). At a local level, these political decisions are linked to the budgetary capacity and the ideological orientation of the government.
- c. Second phase: the gradual increase in the number of children received provoke tensions that transcend the local. Youth migration is already perceived as a specific threat which requires administrative responses ad hoc. In this context, pressure from civil society organisations as well as state Ombudsmen or European agencies, among other actors, accelerates the application of international child care legislation and the coordination with the central state; thus increasing the volume of migrant minors received in an effective manner and the residential resources deployed by the local authorities.
- d. Third phase: the application of child care protocols in a non-discriminatory way creates tensions around the 'pull effect' of good institutional practices. Thus, depending on the political orientation of each local authority, measures can be taken to reduce the number of children assisted, such as weakening the fostering. The reinforcement of the state control of borders and their externalisation to the periphery of Europe provoke a decrease in the volume of minors under guardianship.

5.2. The increasing of the migration flow

According to the results, each of these phases of the institutionalised care corresponds to strategies that allow youth migrants to adapt themselves to the deployment or withdrawal of protocols and local fostering practices. These strategies vary between the cross-border regions studied, but both of them follow the pattern of exploring possibilities of settlement in the state of destination: either through the child care system, or parallel with it (Suárez, 2006). Aragón has gone through a complete juvenile migratory cycle, according to the model of Peris (2015), from 2000 to 2015; starting the cycle all over again with the current increase in fostering (Fig. 1). Since the beginning of the century, the French State and the monitored region (Allard et al., 2017) are currently immersed in this first phase as well. Although, in both cases, with the capacity of existing resources overflowed, the current migration crisis in Europe has accelerated the transition to the second phase (Doineau & Godefroy, 2017; Przybyl, 2017).

In this transition, dysfunctions in the institutional care are multiplied. And these, especially in the French case, attract the claims of activism pro-Human Rights, civic organisations of assistance to migrants and state Ombudsman (Rigoni, 2018). The concentration of young migrants in border areas and large urban areas (Doineau &

Godefroy, 2017) is faced by the states, in both cases, with the distribution of minors to other regions, and their consequent escape to new destinations of their own election (Gkioka & Biswas, 2017). This generates conflicts between the central state and the peripheral regions or among these latter ones: because of the insufficiency of the allocated state budget (Segatto et al., 2018), because of the imposition of the destination, as well as because of the perverse derivation of minors from one region to another or, as the fieldwork confirmed, from Spain to France (providing transport tickets for these journeys). This instability favours, in addition, the hasty recruitment of inexperienced practitioners and the urgent implementation of precarious foster care modalities: sometimes without educators (youth hostels, boarding houses, etc.) or in spatially segregated peri-urban environments (Gimeno, 2014; Bailleul & Senovilla, 2015).

5.3. Two responses to the neoliberal governance of the social

Also, the results show that, due to the overflow, the precariousness of the access to foster care has led to two very different public reactions in both studied regions. In Aragón, in the first decade of the century, this precariousness was made invisible by keeping it within the limits of neoliberal governance of the social (Humphris & Sigona, 2019): reports of associations for the defense of Human Rights, timid parliamentary interpellations and, above all, labour conflicts in the private entities that manage the fostering for the local authorities (Gimeno, 2014). Meanwhile in Nouvelle Aquitaine, as in other French regions, the overflow has favoured the provision of protection outside the institutions, organised by local activist groups, in coordination with French social and humanitarian organisations, both local and national. Thus, in the face of delays in access to foster care, or in response to their denial when the age of majority is determined, local support initiatives for migrant adolescents have arisen throughout France (Rigoni, 2018). During the fieldwork in Poitiers and Toulouse groups of citizens and activists were observed and interviewed. These overcame the limits of the local care management by offering alternatives to the lack of protection in three aspects:

- a. Residential fostering, through host families or collective occupations of buildings (squats).
- b. Volunteer support for education, health and legal needs.
- c. Support while waiting, through non-residential arrangements (Remiv project).

Nowadays, these civic movements of political and technical support lead the social denunciation of the precarious institutional care practices. This empowers young migrants and pressures local authorities to apply international protection protocols according to the principle of non-discrimination by national origin or legal status (Armagnague et al., 2018; Kanics et al., 2010). The recent supra-local coordination of these civic initiatives obliges the state to demand greater efficiency to the regions and is coinciding in time with the change in administrative practices of child care, characteristic of the second phase. The practitioners responsible for child care in the local authorities already have skills that make them experts (Peris, 2015). And they delegate the acceleration of the protocol of access to foster care to private management entities, linked to the privatisation of the Welfare State, as shown by the results. This is the most apparent consequence of the tensions. It dilutes the social pressure of the previous stage of precariousness.

5.4. The importance of local authorities in the face of migration flows

The findings of this study demonstrate as well that the application of national and international protocols allows minors to settle within the child care system in the regions studied. When the flow stabilises, local authorities set in motion filters that seek to avoid the so called 'pull effect' of a good professional practice. Their objective is the decrease in

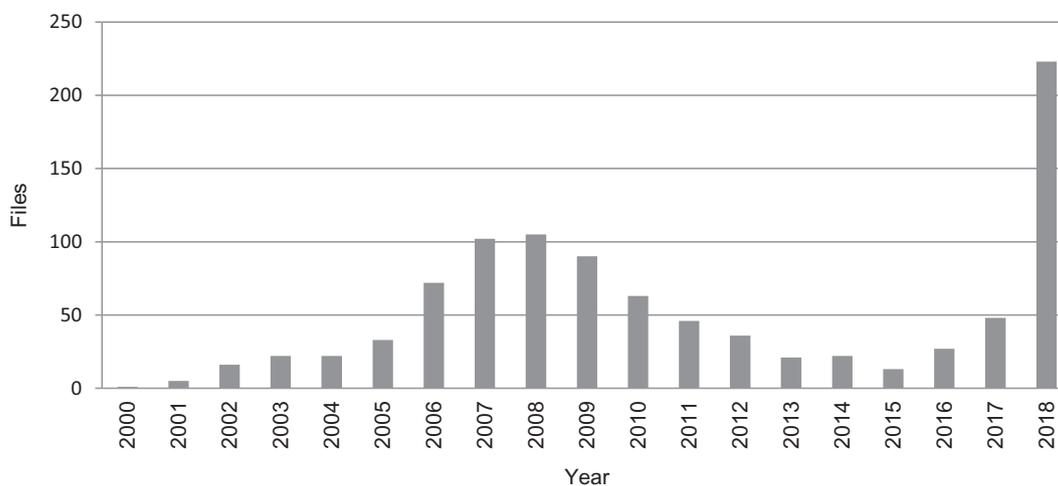


Fig. 1. Open files as of 31 December in Aragón. Annual update of data about UAM, provided for this research by Instituto Aragonés de Servicios Sociales (autonomous government).

the number of minors fostered. In Aragón, for example, in this third phase the local program of support for emancipation was deteriorated, with fewer places and scarce resources. As a consequence, the dissemination of this information within the transnational migratory field, favoured young people to avoid detection and referral to the child care system. They tried to arrive as minors to France or other states further north, where the child care system could result in a better means of social and labour integration. In this period (2011–2013), the duration of the child protection files was significantly reduced: 61.2% lasted six months or less.

Meanwhile, as the subsequent new first phase in Aragon demonstrates, when institutional discourses and practices focus on mitigating or avoiding this migration flow by weakening the fostering, they respond just to a blind spot. According to the results, local authorities should renounce to that implicit objective that the state has granted them. Firstly, because in all the phases, the institutional care is only one of the stages in wider migration itineraries, which also includes:

- a. Actors that authorities do not want to integrate into their child care system: the nuclear and extended family, both in origin and destination; as well as the networks of young migrants, also present during transit (Vacchiano & Jiménez, 2012).
- b. And scenarios that threaten or facilitate displacement, such as exploitation networks and infringement of the law (Petit & Robin, 2014).

This plurality of times, transnational spaces, actors and scenarios, explains better than the local perspective of the authorities why adolescents and young people enter and leave the child care system; as well as it explains the absence of homogeneity in the previous expectations of insertion in the country of destination (Gimeno, 2014).

Also, Aragón is facing this new increasing of the flow with greater capacity to foresee its evolution and to avoid errors in the application (or omission) of the fostering protocols. Hence their interest in training practitioners and contacting international experts and supporting research studies which allow an international comparison. Among the proposals that social workers and research teams share, those based on durable solutions are prioritised: the ones that address all protection needs, take into account the child's point of view and, whenever possible, lead to overcome the situation of unaccompanied or separated minor, when this reaches adulthood (UNHCR & UNICEF, 2014).

6. Conclusion and implications

This article has compared the local policies on fostering unaccompanied minors in two European cross-border regions. It has come to the conclusion that local authorities are responding in very different ways to a same migratory flow that has already become stable in this century. As a consequence, these and other regions can share and transfer successful experiences as durable solutions.

Among these durable solutions, the present study reveals the priority to harmonise age determination protocols, based on technical evidences (Kenny & Loughry, 2018; Wenke, 2017). The local implementation of the procedures implies ethical tensions, since they take place at the threshold for the institutional foster care of adolescents (McLaughlin, 2017). Hence the importance of incorporating the provision of information and listening to minors into the protocols, through 'child friendly' formats appropriate to their estimated age and their situation of vulnerability (Drammeh, 2010). An independent legal representation of the minor, as Aragón has implemented recently, is essential too.

In both regions the fieldwork reveals that there have been and there are successful local experiences of holistic and multidisciplinary methodology in this forensic procedure (Defensor del Pueblo, 2011). On the other hand, this procedure should only be carried out whenever there is no documentary evidence or previous interviews are not decisive (Save the Children, 2018; UNHCR & UNICEF, 2014). The overflow of foster care resources in recent years has often coincided with the discretionary conduct of the tests to young people who presented documentation that would prove their minority. Only the presumption of the minority, recommended internationally (General Comment No 6 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child), will prevent these local practices from harming the most vulnerable children: those who are forced to resort to trafficking networks or to use false documentation.

In the first stage of the reception it is also key to avoid the current negative effect of waiting caused by an administrative process that can be delayed up to one year, as in the French case. The observed local authorities recognise the need to incorporate young people into the care arrangements right from the moment they are located. This is so in order to proceed with the administrative process of guardianship being the children immersed in a safe environment (Brighter Futures, 2013). The procedure, seeking the best interests of the minor, is already used with health services in Aragón. And his elusion is a discretionary form of alteration (Kohli & Kaukko, 2017). French civil society is pointing out with its praxis the need to improve reception in this aspect, by

developing non-residential spaces to accompany young people during this waiting: this is the case of the Remiv project, observed in the city of Poitiers. These inclusive practices affect the final objective that should guide public policies of international protection of children: integration into the host society.

Consequently, local fostering policies should be focused over the medium and long term. They must promote a process that in Europe has two key areas: education and employment. Current barriers to educational success, as well as the precarious labour insertion have to be removed. In the two observed regions there are administrative constraints on the incorporation to universal educational itineraries and adolescents are mainly referred to non-school resources (associations, etc.), which offer a low level qualification (Rigoni, 2018). Practitioners' discourses warn that this educational precariousness causes the departure of young people, seeking new opportunities in other regions and states, especially when they emancipate themselves as new adults or when their age comes closer to this new legal status (Allsopp & Chase, 2019). For these youngsters, the difficulties not only stem from a socio-economic context hostile to the autonomy of young people in Europe, but also from the special difficulty for all the former fostered who become independent from the 'corporate parent' (Ní Raghallaigh & Thornton, 2017).

The fieldwork concludes that the quality of social support from local authorities to youth formerly in care varies widely. This lack of harmonisation is related to the precariousness that research projects like *Becoming adults* have detected in this age group (Sigona, Chase, & Humphris, 2017). And it favours a context where administrative regularity is lost, fears of detention and expulsion to the place of origin arise and, as it has been observed, social practices of informal economy and networks of juvenile infringement emerge (Capelier, 2014). To prevent these risks, it is necessary to prioritise the investment in child care systems at this stage of adult life, which must be addressed technically from the age of sixteen (Meloni & Chase, 2017). Among the technical support observed, it is necessary to motivate for education and employment with strategies such as mentoring or befriending (Fell & Fell, 2014; Kohli, 2006) and maintaining links with practitioners, who must have job stability to be able to accompany through these complex processes.

Likewise, the findings of this study suggest that the incorporation of the family is necessary for such successful accompaniment. This process lacks viability if local authorities do not incorporate the adolescent's family into the protocols. Not as a control strategy, but as an integral part of the transmigrant status of these young people. The proposal of transnational social work is a first step in that direction, still technically underdeveloped (Montesino & y Jiménez, 2015). Meanwhile, it opens the door to a more mature model of foster care, which would broaden the horizons beyond the residential-based programs (Peris, 2015: 407; Giovannetti, 2016: 17). In this direction, there are experiences on host families that already allow the transfer of complementary strategies. There is abundant literature on a practice that allows diversifying the fostering, adapting it to the heterogeneity of profiles and of previous migratory experiences (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008). These same studies indicate that this method also requires educators to facilitate the adaptation of the family and minors' expectations. And it also requires a periodical assessment of the emotional well-being of the adolescent in order to determine the suitability of maintaining the option between family, residence or small facilities (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). French civil society is demonstrating the relevance of universalising this option by coordinating the educational and social actions that a public program of host families should incorporate. By replacing the state in the exercise of its responsibility for protection, observed activists come together with near civic movement, such as the Basque 'Izba project': families' associations that offer themselves to local authorities as a temporary shelter (Epelde, 2017). This emergence of initiatives progressively remedies the scarce implementation of this model of fostering, especially in southern Europe (Saglietti & Zucchermaglio, 2010:

41).

Finally, this article suggests that local authorities should provide access to protection immediately and holistically, even when minors are in transit to other European countries. To achieve this objective more research on the current good practices developed by practitioners and public, civic, private organisations becomes essential.

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